

Outstanding Health Educator

Sharon Biggers, MPH, CHES

Sharon R. Biggers is not only an outstanding health educator, but she is also a superb leader who works tirelessly to improve the overall health of South Carolinians. She has worked as a health educator at the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control for more than 14 years, and for the past six she has served as director of the Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control. Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in South Carolina. Under Sharon's leadership, historic progress has been made in the past two years. Thanks to her exceptional skill in planning, implementing and evaluating effective programs; her commitment to promoting health education; and her dedication to influencing positive health policy, South Carolina is a healthier place today.



Under Sharon's leadership, South Carolina's first ever Youth Tobacco Survey was produced in 2005. In 2007, the state's first Adult Tobacco Survey was administered, and results are currently being analyzed. Sharon ensures that evaluation is part of all of her program's interventions, whether it is effectiveness of the South Carolina Tobacco Quitline (the one-year evaluation was completed in spring 2008) or Rage Against the Haze (evaluation is currently being conducted).

Since the summer of 2006 when the U.S. Surgeon General released the landmark report, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*, 21 S.C. communities have passed smoke-free workplace laws. Sharon worked with agency officials including the Commissioner's Office and Media Relations to develop the agency's official statement about the dangers of secondhand smoke exposure. Local leaders from town attorneys to city council members often turn to Sharon for her expertise.

Sharon works tirelessly with partners to ensure that appropriate community-level interventions are taking place throughout the state. This year she worked with the American Cancer Society, the South Carolina Tobacco Collaborative and other key partners to write, *"Addressing the Toll of Tobacco on South Carolina"*, a five-year strategic plan. This plan will be used as a road map for all tobacco prevention and control activities in our state. In spring 2008, Sharon demonstrated her steadfast commitment to promoting health education individually and collectively when she lead the team that coordinated the state's first ever Tobacco Summit. This daylong event had more than 200 people and made a significant contribution to continuing education for various healthcare professions including health educators.

Sharon's positive attitude and ability to motivate her staff and peers to promote health education in South Carolina, makes her an outstanding health educator.

Congratulations to the 2008 Health Education Award Winners

These winners have demonstrated leadership, dedication and service in the profession. The excerpts from the nominations provide a snapshot of their accomplishments.

Lavell Thornton, MPH, CHES
State Director



South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control



2008 Health Education Award Winners

Office of Public Health Education

Outstanding New Health Educator

Blythe Smith, MPH

Blythe Smith is a Health Educator II in SC DHEC Public Health Region I, Anderson County. She received an undergraduate degree in Health Science from Clemson University and a Masters in Public Health from the University of South Carolina. During the short time that Blythe has been a member of the Public Health Community Systems Team in Region I, she has made honorable accomplishments through her community partnerships and contacts.

Blythe served as the needs assessment chair for Safe Kids Oconee.



Through her leadership efforts, it was identified that child health needed more attention in childcare centers and schools. She was able to work with the March of Dimes and Cancer Grants to set up training on Sun Safety and Safe Sleep. Blythe’s excellent health education skills shows in her work with Oconee County Schools. The local Health Ventures Initiative committed to use the School Health Index in all of the Oconee Middle and High Schools this year and next year.

Blythe also served as the one of the coordinators for the Parish Nurse Program in Anderson County. She was able to focus 7-8 churches with the Body and Soul Program and has worked well past her normal work hours to ensure successful implementation. Blythe is an advocate for health and health education. She was instrumental in gathering a multidisciplinary team to assist with a local stroke screening in collaboration with AnMed Health. Over 250 participants were screened free of charge.

Blythe is constantly challenging the public health care team to bring innovative ideas to the table to impact the health of Public Health Region I. Her passion and enthusiasm are contagious. She inspires the Public Health Community Systems Team in Region I to strive to give their best every day.

“Excellence can be obtained if you:
.....care more than others think is wise;
.....risk more than others think is safe;
.....dream more than others think is practical;
.....expect more than others think is possible.”
Author unknown

Public Health Education Advocate

Murray L. Vincent, Ed.D.

The field of health education, especially in South Carolina, lost a true advocate and friend when Dr. Murray L. Vincent, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Department of Health Promotion and Behavior, Arnold School of Public Health, USC died on May 29, 2008. His many contributions to the profession over the past 40 years are too numerous to document here.



Murray was certainly one of those leading visionaries. During his tenure at USC, Murray was responsible for creating the first undergraduate health education degree in South Carolina as well as all of the health education masters and doctoral degrees at USC. He taught and mentored hundreds of students during his 32 years of teaching and research and provided ongoing support and guidance to former students and faculty.

He was a founder of the S.C. Association for Health Education in 1972, serving as its president in 1981. He also received several awards from SCAHPERD and SCAAHE. The most recent award was the 2005 SCAAHE Researcher/Scholar of the Year. Murray was still active with these organizations as he was spearheading a panel on health education past, present and future for this year’s SCAHPERD Conference. In 2001, Murray gladly accepted the offer to author a history of health education in South Carolina to coincide with SCAHPERD’s 75th Anniversary. No one was more qualified or enthusiastic about this project. The 40 plus page manuscript, *A History of Health Education in South Carolina 1960-2000*, is the only published historical reference on the transformation of health education in South Carolina.

In addition to his teaching and service, Murray gained national recognition with the success of his work in teen pregnancy prevention. His signature effort started in Bamberg County in 1982 with a \$50,000 federal grant, resulting in one the most successful school-community teen pregnancy prevention programs ever created. In the early 1990s, Murray worked to create the S.C. Council on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention, now known as the S.C. Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. From 1999-2001 he was the lead investigator for the evaluation of the statewide adolescent pregnancy prevention initiative funded by the Department of Social Services.

Since his retirement in 1999, Murray authored or co-authored 12 published papers. He provided consultative services for teen pregnancy prevention programs and regularly made presentations to organizations and groups on health education issues.

Anyone who knew Murray will agree that no one spoke more forcefully or passionately for the profession or for the many health and social issues health educators work on everyday to improve their communities.

South Carolina and the nation lost an influential health educator this year. This recognition is an acknowledgement of Murray’s contributions and remarkable career. The metaphor “Standing on the shoulder of giants”, means “*One who develops future intellectual pursuits by understanding the research and works created by notable thinkers of the past*”. Today’s health education leaders proudly stand on Murray’s legacy to advance the profession now and into the future.

Public Health Education Advocate

Susan Collier, MS, RD, LD

Susan Collier is an outstanding individual, registered dietitian, and educator. She has worked tirelessly in Region 3 to promote the public’s health by working with a wide variety of community partners reaching broad audiences. She is innovative in approaches to promote nutrition education. She works seamlessly with the health education staff in program design, implementation and evaluation.



Susan’s career in public health has spanned 16 years. Her experience over the past 26 years has helped her become a much sought after advisor, trainer and advocate for community health nutrition. When she speaks, people listen. She is known throughout the state – in DHEC, State Department of Education, ETV and in academic settings from K-college as a person who makes things happen.

Susan utilizes her ETV experience to assist in the development and production of the State Department of Education (SDE) and SCETV-Instructional TV programs. The **School Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity: Making it Happen** is a statewide program that provides in-service training for administrators, teachers, and food service workers on nutrition and physical activity. Susan provided training sessions across the state in coordination with the SDE.

Another project with SCETV/ITV was to develop health promotion segments for the *Know It All/Healthy* (www.knowitall.org/healthy) website. The project was created to provide resources that support the objectives of the Student Health and Fitness Act 2005, currently being implemented in South Carolina schools.

Susan is actively involved in working with community partners to assess community nutrition needs and resources. She is an active member of many health and wellness advisory committees. These collaborations have led to success in changing nutrition education policies and practices. She provides technical assistance and training for the Color Me Healthy.

She is the co-chair for the SC Action for Healthy Kids Team and is working to create a state action plan. Other activities include training and leadership with obesity prevention partnerships. Susan is an asset to SC DHEC Region 3 and the state of South Carolina.